

# Lionized here, Gorbachev is Jimmy Carter II at home

**A**MERICAN self-hatred is, as we know, quite unrestrained amongst the American intelligentsia. Their low opinion of America is clearly observable in their arty films, their morbid textbooks, their other intellectual ejecta.

Veterans groups and other patriotically inclined citizens are always impatient with our intellectuals' low opinion of their own country, which can be taken as a form of snootiness. It is nothing of the kind.

Rather it is precisely the kind of hatred of one's own country that is so observable among the eggheads of Somalia and other Third World backwaters. American intellectuals are easily shamed, owing to their own mediocrity.

Thus they disparage our way of life, our history and our leaders. Reagan is a bumbler. Bush is a twit. And Mikhail Gorbachev is the most sagacious leader since, well, I suppose, Mao.

There are not all that many leaders whom our anti-American intellectuals have greatly esteemed, and those they have esteemed are usually not very democratic.

A decade or so ago they were starry-eyed for Mao, and until quite recently Castro was their beau ideal.

There was even a time when Mussolini and Hitler fetched a round of applause from certain American intellectuals. In the 1920s The New Republic was briefly



**R. EMMETT  
TYRRELL JR.**

**Like Castro  
and Mao  
before him, he  
enchants  
America's  
eggheads**

smitten by Mussolini, and shortly thereafter the left-wing novelist Theodore Dreiser had a good word for Hitler.

All this is a matter of history that recedes farther into the misty past with every tick of the clock. But what about Gorbachev? Is he the political master that we hear he is?

The Russians are beginning to perceive him as very much the klutz. In fact they refer to him *sotto voce* as their Jimmy Carter, and though some Americans are glorifying Carter with a charitable reappraisal, the Soviets are not. They see the Carter administration as a government of stupendous ineptitude, and fear that their president is even more the bungler.

Here Gorbachev is lionized for a string of masterful gambits toward democratization and peace. In Moscow, even those who yearn

for democracy and peace recognize these moves as absurd miscalculations.

In Poland he anticipated the replacement of its hard-line communist government with a coalition under communist control. He was wrong.

In Eastern Europe he thought he could purge all the old Stalinist leaders and replace them with communists sharing his point of view. To his surprise all the Gorbachev-types were quickly swept away by popular uprisings seeking real democracy and self-determination.

He believed that if he allowed East Germany freedom to unite with West Germany, the grateful Germans would grant Moscow generous loans. Instead German money is being spent on East Germany and the Soviet Union remains broke.

Michael Ledeen, one of Washington's most astute observers of the world scene, has written that "Gorbachev has no workable vision for the future of Soviet society. Indeed, it is almost impossible to determine what Gorbachev wants to do about almost any of the problems he faces. Lacking vision, his actions are disconnected and incoherent."

Whereupon Ledeen goes on to cite Gorbachev's dangerous reversals on Lithuania.

One day he allows Lithuanian independence. Then he sends in troops.

Today he admits the failure of communism. Tomorrow he thumps for central planning.

He travels to Vilnius to beg for Lithuanian support. Then he offers Lithuanians independence for a mere \$33 billion. Next he beefs up the Red Army and turns loose the KGB.

A puckish Russian emigre living in Paris advises that a more appropriate name for Gorbachev's program of *perestroika* would be *catastroika*. It has been in the West's best interest over the short run, but over the long run it could lead to greater instability in his country and to international danger.

Then possibly America's anti-American intelligentsia will see Gorbachev for the inept leader he has been. To them he will be no Mao but rather the Ronald Reagan of Moscow, for they never will get Reagan right.